



HILLSIDE SOD TESTS COMPACT WHEEL LOADER

Jim Chaudoin is no stranger to Kawasaki wheel loaders. His three Florida-based companies — Jim's Logging and Land Clearing, St. John's Landscaping and Hillside Sod Farms — use the Kawasaki brand. The first two companies run 60s, 65s, and 70s in order to site-clear lots ranging in size from Home Depot and Walmart to Family Dollar and Dollar General, as well as handle landscaping projects. But Hillside Sod, with its emphasis on providing sod for housing developments and highway right of ways, is the first to put the compact 45ZV-2 to the test.

"My GS Equipment sales rep dropped off a 45 one day because we were looking for something about that size," explains Chaudoin. "The 42 and 45 compacts were brand new to Kawasaki, and the rep wanted my honest opinion. I told him that I'd run the 45 until the end of the year, and if I liked it, I'd go ahead and buy it. Well, I leased it for four months, then went ahead and bought it."

Hillside's 45 came equipped with forks that were also ordered through the dealership.

Hillside Sod Farms handles the 1,500 to 4,000-pound pallets of bahia-grass sod with ease. Bahia grass is used in residential and commercial applications.

Their 45 unloads bahia grass sod. A tough southern grass originally imported from South America, bahia is very drought and heat tolerant. Until relatively recently, it was primarily used on southern cattle ranches for pasture land. But some communities in Florida are now mandating its use in backyards in order to cut water consumption. Bahia is also ideal for roadside right of ways, again because of its low maintenance qualities.

Hillside cuts their bahia from a 350,000-acre cattle ranch located some 40 miles away from the company's Geneva headquarters. The rich pasture is cut into 16-inch wide by two-foot long by an inch-and-a-half to two-inch deep strips. Between 150 to 152 strips are placed on each pallet, so each pallet holds 400 square feet. Depending on the moisture content of the strips, a pallet can weigh between 1,800 to 4,000 pounds.

"We like to use articulated wheel loaders as opposed to four-wheel drive forklifts," explains Bill Jacobs, Office Manager. "The way they are set up, if you are in a tight subdivision, you can unload both sides of a semi from just one side. It's much faster and easier."

"The only problem we've encountered with the 45 is our own fault: the fuel hasn't been clean enough. But we've got that figured out now. I wish I could get three more just like it!"

Bill may just get his wish. "I've always liked Kawasaki loaders," says Jim. "Overall they are very good. Our new 45 does a fantastic job, and if it holds up as well as its bigger brothers, we'll certainly get more. Kawasaki makes a very good machine and their local dealership here is excellent. We've been doing business with GS Equipment for over 15 years. They are very good people, they're honest, and whenever we need parts or service, they are johnny-on-the-spot."

Hillside Sod Farms, Inc. is serviced by GS Equipment, Orlando, Florida.